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Actions for Change: Assess and Modify Organizational Behavior; Views From A PCX

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National Planning Center of Expertise for Coastal Storm Damage Reduction
US Army Corps of Engineers
North Atlantic Division
Planning to save lives in the future.

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AGENDA

- Actions for Change
- Organizational Behavior Intro
- Observations from PCX Viewpoint
- Conclusions

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Actions For Change (AFC)

Theme 1: Comprehensive Systems Approach

1. Employ an integrated, comprehensive and systems-based approach.
5. Employ adaptive planning and engineering systems.
6. Focus on sustainability.

Theme 2: Risk Informed Decision Making

2. Employ risk-based concepts in planning, design, construction, operations & major maintenance.
7. Review and inspect completed works.

Theme 3: Communication of Risk to the Public

9. Effectively communicate risk.
10. Establish public involvement risk reduction strategies.

Theme 4: Professional and Technical Expertise

3. Continuously reassess and update policy for program development, planning guidance and design and construction standards.
4. Employ dynamic independent review.
8. *Assess and modify organizational behavior.*
11. Manage and enhance technical expertise and

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#8 AFC in Detail

#8 Assess and Modify Organizational Behavior ***Assess our organizational behavior and processes. Develop and implement changes to provide seamless integration and collaboration across functions, projects, regions and USACE. A guiding principle for the assessment will be teams and organizations operating in an integrated manner.***

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Hurricane Protection Decision Chronology (HPDC) Investigation

Initial Factual Findings: Context for Decision Making

"Perfect Storm" of Intersecting Factors

Institutional:
Lack of Dynamic Practices & Processes for Incorporating New Information/Technology

Sensitivity to Cost Issues

Vision:
Migration Away From Original Unified System

Implications to System Risk & Reliability

Organizational
Inconsistent and Ineffective Communications

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Organizational Behavior

- **Study of individual and group dynamics in an organizational setting.**

- **How individuals and groups *act* in organizations.**

- **Encompasses behavior, *change*, team assignment, leadership, *decision making* and many other factors.**

- **People-Organization relationships**

- **Good relationships result from achieving human objectives, organizational objectives**

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PCX Observations

- **USACE National Planning Center of Expertise for Coastal Storm Damage Reduction (CSDR) lead at NAD.**

- **Faced with studies from around the US coastline encountering challenges, roadblocks.**

- **For most, CSDR planning and policy was *not* at the root of the challenge. In sending task forces in person to the affected organizations, we determined that there were other factors at cause.**

- **<u>Overall:</u> Organizational behavior defects affected the decision making process in various studies analyzed.**

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Communication Challenges

- Inability to communicate in a group.
- Lacking confidence to speak up and out.
- Need to communicate knowledge, support positions and participate in decision making.

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The Outsider

- PCX perceived this way. Ex. A district might view a PCX visit as a sign that their efforts on a study were not “up to par”. They can perceive that the PCX is here to criticize, *judge*, and “look over their shoulders”. This is especially true if the visit was requested by HQ.
- “We do things our way”
- Aversion to new people. “Who these PCX people??”

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Stubbornness

- Resistant to change.
- Cultural behavior can be an inhibitor for change.
- Cling to old methods and models, as they provide security.
- “This is our backyard, we live here and know what we are doing”.
- Do not welcome suggestions on decisions.

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Personal Behavior When Face With Challenges

- Helplessness.
- Succumbing too soon.
- Lack of confidence.
- No positive thinking.

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Responsiveness to Decision Making

- **Excessive restraint.**
- **Taking time to resolve the issue.**
- **“If we take long enough, maybe it will solve itself.”**

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Entering and Exiting Groups

- "Revolving door" group membership.
- For new members, extended transition periods delay decision making.
- In some cases, new members are not welcomed by existing group members.
- Even former members can affect decision making.
- Ex. Former group member still ties himself to the group, exerts control which he does not have. New member's perspective not yet accepted and assessed during decision making. Former member sh provide info on past actions and allow newe member to develop and be accepted by the group.

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Not Aware of Environment:

- Corps
- Regional
- Local
- Group

Even *plans* for physical changes need to

be assessed and included in

decision making.

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Behavioral Inhibitors to Collaboration

- Not establishing good initial relationships with study sponsors, local officials and agency representatives (Collaborators).
- Lack of trust can develop, which can even magnify simple decisions.
- Study group can become resentful that they need to devote more time to communicate, reach out to Collaborators.
- Improved professionalism and technical expertise of study group would be appreciated by Collaborators.
- Study groups need to reach out to Collaborators more to participate in the group, which has the potential to lessen opposition and support development of consensus. Group members need to be open to collaborate.

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Limited Leadership

- Leadership needs to be constant and consistent.
- Divided group.
- Long for leadership, direction.
- On/Off approach not beneficial.
- For major decisions, leaders input and/or awareness would help.

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Conclusions

- **Assessing your own organization behavior is a challenge. Modifying it is even greater.**
- **As individuals, *we need to accept changes* in long-standing polices and procedures more readily. By doing so, we can encourage the groups and organizations that we are members of to *become more adaptive*.**
- **We need to be more *aware of changes* and updates and *communicate* them more effectively.**
- **Decision-making should be approached with the *mindset* of improving professionalism and/or technical expertise.**

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Questions?